

Green Hill seeks help with restoring historical monuments

BY KRYSTAL SHETLER



The Paoilni Temple monument in Green Hill Cemetery is shown with stabilizers throughout the limestone structure to keep it from collapsing on itself.

BEDFORD — Nestled in the heart of Bedford sit acres of rolling green hills that hold generations of local history.

Green Hill Cemetery is a treasure trove of local lore. The first person to be buried in the cemetery died in 1826, and since then, it has become the eternal resting place of some of Bedford's most beloved residents.

But amid the fanciful limestone and granite monuments is the untold story on the effects time and the elements play on stone. Volunteers work tirelessly to care for the treasured monuments, but restoration doesn't just require labor — oftentimes, funding is a key to preserving the historic grave markers that have made Green Hill a tourist attraction and keeper of Bedford's history.

"Once you pass that second or third generation ... there's no one left to look out for those family markers," said Dan Bortner, president of the Green Hill Cemetery Association, which oversees the operation of the cemetery.

"That's where the cemetery has to take the responsibility as much as possible."

Last week, the Times-Mail wrote about the efforts underway to preserve the stone of Evalou Gaussin, a 7-yearold who died in 1894. She is buried near her parents, not far from the circle at the top of the hill in the cemetery. Volunteers have restored about 20 monuments in the past year alone.

"Our volunteers do such great work," Bortner said. "Some just take a lot more than what we can do."

Take the Paolini Temple, for example. It is a limestone monument patterned after the Greek Parthenon. The stone inside the temple bears the family crest. The marker, however, is in bad shape and has been stabilized, but there is no way volunteers can take on the project alone. They must seek outside help which, even with discounts, will cost the cemetery about \$10,000, Bortner said.

"It was literally crumbling under its own weight," Bortner said.

The Green Hill Cemetery Association applied for and received a challenge grant from the Lawrence County Community Foundation. It's a \$1-for-every-\$2-raised matching grant up to \$3,500. That means, if Green Hill raises \$7,000, then the foundation will match it with \$3,500 for a total of \$10,500. That money could be used to restore the Paolini Temple, Bortner said.

"Anyone who gets involved with Green Hill has a passion for it," Bortner said. "It's a labor of love. We all want it to look nice. It's iconic, and we want to present the right picture for the folks who visit Bedford and tour the cemetery, looking at our community's history."

To donate to help Green Hill meet its matching grant goal, checks can be mailed to the **Green Hill Cemetery Association, PO Box 1442, Bedford, IN 47421**. The challenge grant ends Dec. 1, 2020, so donations should be sent before mid-November.

Bortner said volunteers are always needed, too. Anyone who has a passion for history and saving Green Hill's piece of it should contact Bortner, Gene Abel or Dale Platteter at the cemetery office (812-275-5110) for more information on how to volunteer.